

AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO



THE NEWBERY HONOR-WINNING AUTHOR OF
THE WAR THAT SAVED MY LIFE

PRAISE FOR *THE NIGHT WAR*



**"Historical fiction at
its finest."**

—*School Library Journal*, starred review

**"Engaging
[and]
imaginative."**

—*The Horn Book*



**"A gripping, humane
tale that examines
what war demands of
children and what it
costs them."**

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review



ABOUT THE BOOK

The Night War is a middle grade novel set at the border between freedom and fear in World War II France, at the Château de Chenonceau, where a Jewish girl who has lost everything but her life must decide whether to risk even that to bring others to freedom.

In her return to the era of *The War That Saved My Life* and *The War I Finally Won*, Kimberly Brubaker Bradley brings a new and different story, one with a mystical twist, that explores a little-known slice of World War II history, a highly unusual friendship, and the power of choosing courage even when—especially when—there are no good choices to be had.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kimberly Brubaker Bradley is the two-time Newbery Honor-winning and #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of several acclaimed middle grade novels, including *Fighting Words*, *The War That Saved My Life*, *The War I Finally Won*, and *Jefferson's Sons*. She and her husband have two grown children and live with their dog, several ponies, a highly opinionated mare, and a surplus of cats on a fifty-two acre farm in Bristol, Tennessee.

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INTRODUCTION

The Night War by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley presents the reader with choices. Right choices? Wrong choices? Good choices? Bad choices? Times when the choices aren't ours to make?

It has been said that the victor writes the history. *The Night War* takes a long and necessary look at who writes the history, and asks that we all be brave enough to see one another as more than just a label and, when faced with adversity, that we make courageous choices.

As seen in this novel, teachers and students faced difficult choices in 1942 as Germany advanced their occupation of Europe through France; today, students and teachers face their own choices. This novel and this guide bring many important issues to the forefront and will help to facilitate essential discussions of themes, academic exploration, analysis of how history is constantly evolving, and text-to-self connections that encourage deeper understanding of characters, literature, students' worlds, and themselves.

VOCABULARY IDEAS

Before reading Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's novel *The Night War* with your students, explore some of the vocabulary from the book to give context to your students and to be able to take deeper dives into topics and themes as you read. Here are some vocabulary activity suggestions below, or use one of your own favorites!

T-CHART

- Create a T-chart on large chart paper and have your students place the words in the box below into two categories: "Familiar" and "Unfamiliar."
- Next, hang sheets of smaller paper in various places around the room.
- On each sheet, write one unfamiliar vocabulary word and the sentence the word is used in from *The Night War*.
- Have students use context clues to write an initial definition.
- Students then look up the definition in a dictionary or on a vocabulary website and write the definition.
- Once definitions have been provided on each smaller paper, have students come up with original ways to present each word (e.g., act out the word, draw the word as if it had a personality, sing the word, etc.).
- Rotate until all students have experienced the original presentation of each unfamiliar word.

GLOSSARY INDEX CARDS

Students may want to create their own glossary for *The Night War* with a set of index cards.

- To begin, students should draw a diagonal line across an index card.
- On the top half, they should write the vocabulary word and definition.
- On the bottom half, have them draw a picture of the word and then use the word in a sentence.

fromage • dommage • citron • Pletzl • Kristallnacht • Shabbos • challah • bile
gendarmes • gentile • concierges • Vichy • rosaries • Christians • Jews • prejudice
venomous • vélodrome • crucifix • Communist • baptism • salvation • Shema
Château de Chenonceau • Diane de Poitiers • Catherine de' Medici • repenting
refugee • passeur • "undesirables" • Yiddish • Hebrew • nuns • collide • obscured
Huguenots and the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre • Protestant • John Calvin

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.5.4

Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 5 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER ONE

1. Why do you think the roof is Miriam's safe place? Do you have a safe place? How do you feel when you are there?
2. Miriam runs and throws herself between Monsieur Rosenbaum and the soldier. How would you describe Miriam's actions? What might you have done? Why?
3. Miriam believes that it is her fault that Monsieur Rosenbaum is taken away. Why do you think Miriam carries that guilt? Have you ever felt guilt over something beyond your control? How did you deal with those feelings?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

CHAPTERS TWO AND THREE

4. Make a list of all of the changes Miriam has gone through since Kristallnacht. How have things changed regarding her family's living conditions and the amount of food they have? What are some of the little things that Miriam's parents do to maintain normalcy for the family?
5. Recall Miriam's first encounter with the French policeman, her classmate Thomas's dad, in Chapter Two. After the second encounter in Chapter Three, discuss what you are thinking and feeling. How might things have been different if Thomas's dad had made different choices?

CHAPTER FOUR

6. "We always have a choice. Not in what happens to us, but in what we do in response." What does this quote mean to you? What do you think it meant to Miriam?

CHAPTER SIX

7. When Miriam is stopped by the German soldier and a Catholic nun grabs her arm, she says she is caught between two evils. Why does Miriam consider both the German soldier and the Catholic nun evil? What experience does Miriam have with either? Does she have grounds to consider them evil? Do her views change as the novel progresses? Explain.
8. "You may have to pretend to be someone else for a while." From chapter 7 forward, Miriam becomes known as Marie because it "sounds less Jewish." Miriam also realizes that she must not sing to Nora in Hebrew or speak to her in Yiddish. They had to disguise themselves and only speak French. Why does Miriam feel a fresh grief? What had she lost? Have you ever had to pretend to be someone you are not in order to be accepted by others? How did this make you feel?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS CONTINUED

END OF NOVEL

9. Is it okay to do bad things to stay in power to be able to do good things? Will the good achieved outweigh the bad experienced? Does it matter if innocent lives are lost (i.e., babies, children, the elderly)? Does one kind of life matter more than another? How can we connect this to *The Night War*?
10. How is Catherine de' Medici portrayed in this novel? How are the Nazis portrayed in this novel? Can we accurately judge people's actions in the past? Explore people in history who have been responsible for the deaths of others. How do we view them as a society? Do we view them differently? If yes, why?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

SEE ME IN 3D

Miriam faces many obstacles in *The Night War*, and one of the biggest obstacles she faces is knowing whom she can trust. Can she trust the police to protect her from harm? Can she trust the Catholic nuns? Can she trust Jacqueline and Beatrice? Should she believe what she's seen and heard? Should Miriam make decisions based on more than a person's outer layers? How do we get to know who someone really is? This extension activity combines the use of identity charts, a discussion about stereotypes, and a two-voice poem to help us examine the characterization of both Miriam, our protagonist, and of our students as well.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.

PART ONE: IDENTITY CHARTS

WHO DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU SEE ME?

Who am I? How does the world see me? Have students think about themselves and how they fit into this world with an identity chart. They can start wherever they are comfortable, either describing what everyone sees at first glance, or by charting the parts of themselves that may not be common knowledge. Before students learn about other cultures, it is important for them to see the humanity in themselves and in their classmates. Once they have started making connections with one another, it opens opportunities for them to start seeing connections with other cultures—in literature and in life.

WHO DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU SEE MIRIAM?

Our protagonist, Miriam Erika Schrieber, is a twelve-year-old French Jewish immigrant, but she is so much more than this one-line description. She is a beloved daughter. She is a protective big sister. She is scared and she is brave. Keeping an identity chart while reading *The Night War* will help students see Miriam for who she was before Kristallnacht—before the broken glass, and after moving from their spacious home in Germany to their tiny apartment in Paris, to the roundup which separates her from her family. Creating an identity chart while reading will help students see all 360 degrees of our protagonist, track character development, and document characterization of Miriam's physical attributes and her strong-willed personality.

**CLICK HERE FOR A
SAMPLE IDENTITY CHART**

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

PART TWO: STEREOTYPE DISCUSSION

After your students have charted Miriam's identity and their own, engage them in an open and honest conversation about stereotypes.

Discuss how stereotypes are generalizations or shortcuts used to make decisions about groups of people quickly without any substantial background knowledge. Have students think and share how they sometimes see the world and how the world might view them.

ASK THE FOLLOWING:

- How are Miriam, and Jews in general, stereotyped in *The Night War*?
- Why do you think the Nazis stereotyped Jewish people?
- Why do we need to avoid stereotyping and speak up against the stereotyping of other people?

JOURNAL ENTRY:

Think about your Identity Charts and the discussion surrounding stereotypes. Think about the intersection of how you identify and how the world identifies and stereotypes groups of people.

- What do you notice?
- Why do you think stereotypes still exist today as it did in WWII?
- What do you think you can do to help with stereotypes?

This isn't to share with the class but to reflect on your own.



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

TWO-VOICE POEM

Voices can be powerful.

But voices can also be silenced, as we see in *The Night War*. As Miriam interacts with other characters in *The Night War*, we visualize those characters through their dialogue with Miriam. Two-voice poetry allows students to construct conversations between different characters to produce different perspectives on topics in the novel.

HAVE PARTNERS:

- Choose two characters with similar or opposing views from *The Night War*.
- Brainstorm some similarities and differences between the two characters. Use a chart to organize your ideas, like a three-column chart (example below) or a Venn diagram.
- Students will work in partner groups, but each student is responsible for one character's perspective. Partners may work together to decide on a line that may be read in unison.
- This poem is designed to be read by two voices. Set up the poem so that most of the time, one voice is speaking at a time. Periodically, to add emphasis, depth, and power, both voices may be speaking at the same time.
- This poem is meant to be read out loud. Encourage students to practice reading it together until they are both comfortable with their presentation.
- As partners perform their poems, ask the class to listen to be able to identify the perspectives of the characters. How does each character feel? How do we know? How does each student use their voice to express the character's perspective? What themes arise through the characters' voices?

EXAMPLE POEMS ON NEXT PAGE!

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

TWO-VOICE POEM EXAMPLES

THE BAKER	BOTH SAY THIS ABOUT TOPIC	MADAME VERTRON
I am the baker in the Pletzl.		I am a concierge in the Pletzl.
I bake challah for Shabbat.		I pass out credentials at the front door.
	I notice when the men are taken away by the soldiers.	
I tell Miri to look me in my eye and say, "Hello."		I ask Miri if she needs her parents' credentials, too.
	I see the fear in Miriam's eyes.	
I must go into hiding before the soldiers come for me.		I warn Miriam to run and hide!
	Be brave, Miriam.	

CLICK THE ICONS BELOW TO WATCH VIDEO EXAMPLES!



Brave New Voices



Over and Out

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.3](#) Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.5.2](#) Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.D](#) Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

TAKE A LOOK AT BRAVERY

"Vern heldishe." Be brave.

"You need something green and growing. Flowers are as necessary as bread."

"We don't choose how we feel, but we choose how we act. Choose courage."

Throughout *The Night War*, Miriam is constantly being reminded to be brave and to choose courage, and when she chooses to be brave, someone around her also chooses to be brave. First, she and Nora are shielded by a woman as they slip down and away from the crowd. Next, they are assisted by Sister Felicité when they are stopped by the soldier. All along Miriam's journey, others like Bette at the castle and the sisters at the convent, and even the other students, choose bravery and courage. It's as if Miriam's bravery is contagious—in the best possible way.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.5.7

Conduct short research projects that use several sources to build knowledge through investigation of different aspects of a topic.

NATIONAL ARTS STANDARDS

Anchor Standard 1: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

ASSIGNMENT OPTION 1

Research a courageous person in history. Teachers may decide to have students focus their research on the 1939–1945 World War II time period (see the Historical Bravery Connection below). Discover how and why they were courageous. Find a photograph of that person. Try to find a photograph of the person in the act of being brave. Did they cause a bravery chain reaction, like Miriam? Center your research around finding as many photographs as possible and details surrounding their courage.

ASSIGNMENT OPTION 2

Find a person you know (even yourself) who has been caught being brave. Was there a courage contagion? Work very hard to take pictures of your person in the act of being brave. Take as many pictures as possible. Interview your brave person (or ask a friend or family member to interview you if you are the person who was brave!).

Find out what motivates them to be brave.

PHOTO GALLERY

Find a prominent place to display a Bravery Hall of Fame.

Add snippets of language and examples from your research and interviews. Invite local reporters (and/or family and friends!) to come and see it. Add to it as much as possible throughout the school year. Brave people who choose to be courageous to make a difference in the world are an inspiration.

HISTORICAL BRAVERY CONNECTION

Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, has a program called Righteous Among the Nations, where brave and courageous people who hid and rescued Jews during the Holocaust are honored with the title Righteous Among the Nations. Explore the website, the database, the featured stories, and the photo galleries to learn more about their stories.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

TIMELINE ACTIVITY

The Night War centers around a specific time in history, where one event builds upon another. Several crucial events occur prior to the start of the novel. This timeline will allow students to picture what led up to July 10, 1942, the opening pages of the novel.

Continuing the timeline allows students to follow along with Miriam on this perilous journey through time and to understand more deeply the reaction of the world.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.7

Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.2

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

- Create a timeline using butcher paper on the classroom wall.
- Start the timeline with 1935 and continue in increments of ten years through today.
- Divide the timeline into two separate horizontal sections, labeling those sections "Europe" and "America."
- Research what was happening in the United States while European Jews were being targeted by the Nazi regime.
- While reading *The Night War*, have students record relevant and important historical events and dates onto the timeline, beginning with Kristallnacht, November 9–10, 1938.
- Pose the question: How did Americans respond to news reports on Kristallnacht and other major events where Jews were being persecuted in Europe?
- Have students research old newspaper articles and other primary sources and find different accounts of the historical events as they are presented in the novel. Add details to the timeline. Encourage students to read a variety of old articles to ensure a more well-rounded understanding of the historical events. (See the Silencing the Press video clip below.)
- Discuss the different reactions of countries, governments, and people during World War II in Europe and the United States. How were they similar? How were they different? How might the war have been affected if different decisions were made? Do you think the world would respond differently today? Explain.
- Allow students to consider any current events happening around the world today where injustices are occurring. Continue to post events and reactions through the current year.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES CONTINUED

TEACHER RESOURCES

Americans and the Holocaust

US Newspapers and the Holocaust

Clip 1: Silencing the Press

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- There is still a lot of work to do to fight against injustices. Have students examine current events that show instances where groups are still being persecuted for who they are. Spread kindness, love, and education by encouraging your students to support a cause they care about.
- 10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism
- The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is an excellent source of information about the Holocaust, including virtual field trips. <https://www.ushmm.org/>



*Teachers should review all videos and materials to ensure they are age appropriate for their classrooms.

*Website links may periodically stop working. To troubleshoot a link that is not working, please visit

<https://edu.gcfglobal.org/en/internet-tips/tips-for-fixing-broken-links/1/> or search "Why my link is not working" for other tips.

ALSO BY KIMBERLY BRUBAKER BRADLEY

#1 New York Times bestseller
Newbery Honor-winning book
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3 STARRED REVIEWS

★ **"Brisk and honest . . .
Cause for celebration."**

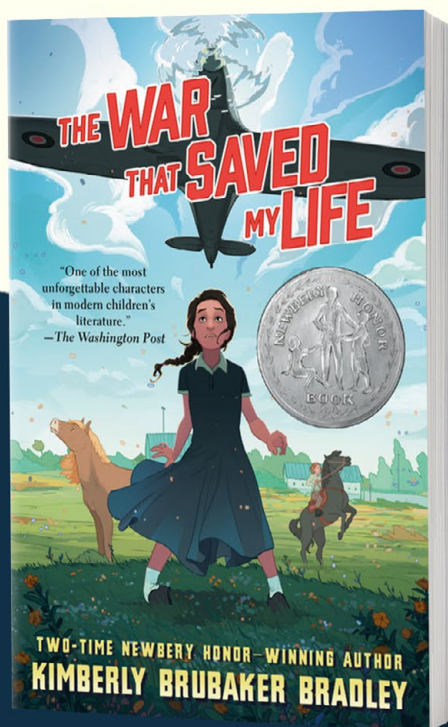
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ **"Powerful."**

—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ **"Poignant."**

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



Horn Book Fanfare Best of the Year
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4 STARRED REVIEWS

★ **"Ada is for the ages—as is
this book. Wonderful."**

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ **"Bradley sweeps us up . . .
even as she moves us to tears."**

—*The Horn Book*, starred review

★ **"Perceptive . . . satisfying . . .
will stay with readers."**

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

